

From Scripture to Song: on organizing a poetic, music-oriented Bible Translation workshop¹

[SPOT 1]

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God has no personal, favorite songs. He hears all that we say in whatever language. It is sufficient for us to compose hymns of praise to Him with our own music and in our own language for Him to understand. Prophet William Wade Harris (1850-1929)

Look at the Harrists. When they come out of the church they dance as people in the villages have always danced. In singing the songs as people have always sung them, only the words have changed² (newspaper article, 1991)

In a many ways, these quotes reflect a true ‘success story’, one in which indigenous worship in mother tongue has been encouraged and has been able to evolve naturally. In the late 1800’s, the Prophet Harris, leaving his native Liberia, walked barefoot along the Ivoirian coast carrying an English Bible, a bamboo cross, and a calabash (for baptizing). He entreated huge crowds, in the hundreds and even thousands, to burn their fetishes and turn to the living God. Harris prophesied that foreigners would come bringing the Bible. They would come and make the Bible message clear. Today this prophecy is fulfilled, but only partially, since the Harris church and the descendants of those who heard him preach are still waiting for the whole Bible³ in their mother tongue. One also wonders: how can these indigenous songs be truly Scripture-based if there are no Scriptures to base them on?

While ‘whole Bibles’ in mother tongue are still rare in many African countries⁴, other challenges also loom large. Those of us who labor so diligently to produce printed Bibles and who struggle so hard to promote literacy at times face hard realities. To what extent are printed Bibles being used? How successful have our literacy programs been? How do we reach ‘the excluded majority’, the illiterate of this world, in a day and age when reading is still an un-acquired skill or is not the favored medium of communication? In pre-literate and semi-literate cultures, as well as in many literate ones, people continue to rely heavily on oral (and other) means to express their aesthetic, emotional, cultural and religious values⁵. Paul’s emphasis on the oral (‘...and how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard?, Rom 10.14, NIV) remains ever current, to not exclude other forms of information delivery

¹ Thanks to Janvier Blewoue and Roger Tiemoko for filming my last UBS workshop on Habakkuk, offered in February, 2013. We wish to thank all the participants for their good will and skill. Thanks also to Mario Zogbo for cutting the needed ‘spots’. A special heads up to Phil Noss who saw the need and gave special attention to consultant training in media and to Ernst Wendland for his continual encouragement and example.

² Both quotes come from Krabill (1995), the first being a direct quote from the Prophet Harris sometime around the turn of the century, the second coming from a newspaper article (Koffi: 1971:4). See this work for an outstanding study of hymn development among the Dida, a Kru people of Côte d’Ivoire.

³ In Africa, in the early missionary era until quite recently, the first translation efforts have been concentrated on rendering the Gospels in mother tongue, surely motivated by the desire to reach unreached peoples quickly with the message of the Good News. Today’s missiologists understand the importance and need of having the whole Bible available in mother tongue (Zogbo in Noss, 2007 and Kenmogne et al, 2009). The Dida NT, where Harris preached was completed at the end of 2012, but still not published.

⁴ Taking Ivory Coast as an example, after a half century or more of work by the Bible Society and SIL, there are only 5 full Bibles for over 60 language groups, one virtually unreadable.

⁵ Indeed, Bible scholars point to oral origins for much of Scripture.

(digital, visual, video, online, TV, film)⁶. The Christian world scrambles to keep up with modern technological means of communication, and rightly so!

This article is based on several premises:

- (i) poetry and song are universal categories⁷
- (ii) biblical poetry can be translated as poetry using mother tongue rhetorical devices
- (iii) song is a powerful way to communicate Scriptural truths⁸

One of the focal points of our long career as Bible Translation consultant has been helping African translators to understand and appreciate the beauty of poetry in the Scriptures, with a view to producing poetic renderings in their own languages and, as the opportunity arises, to express biblical truths in Scripture-based song. This has included:

- teaching university level courses on *Translating Hebrew Poetry* and *Translation and Media*⁹,
- writing books and articles on the subject,
- leading numerous workshops on individual poetic books¹⁰, some involving song-creation,
- assisting song writers and singers to produce songs to accompany the *Faith Comes by Hearing* NT listening program,
- attempting to create event-specific CDs in various African languages, with Scriptures set to music,
- attempting to communicate the Word of God in a relevant way through popular radio programs.

While in the past, some have considered ‘translating poetry as poetry’ to be an unnecessary, unrealistic, or even an impossible goal, today’s scholars recognize *the intricate link between form and meaning* and the importance of the careful use of local rhetoric devices in the communication of Scriptural truths (Wendland, 1994, 2004, 2009, Zogbo and Wendland, 2000, Zogbo, forthcoming¹¹). With the firm conviction that it is both imperative and possible to reach this goal, we share here reflections and practical suggestions on how to train, plan and lead workshops¹² with a view to facilitating successful poetic transfer and song-creation. We believe that rendering biblical poetry as poetry (and as song) leads to a more complete assimilation of the Biblical message in cultures worldwide.

⁶ It is interesting to note that texting and facebook imitate oral speech: *u n me, gonna*, etc.

⁷ We will not enter into the long and heated debate of what constitutes poetry. For a discussion of the definitions of poetry, Zogbo and Wendland, 2000.

⁸ This is obviously not ‘new’ news. As for UBS general policy: ‘In truth audio has always been an essential element in our engaging in Scripture...it is arguable that audio is the most effective medium today to carry the Word of God to those who have yet to receive it.’ (quoted in Zogbo, 2005. UBS has attempted to make non print media a priority, for example ‘Bible and Media: Engaging the Audience through Art’, a workshop held in Chiang-Mai, September, 2002. Workshops on Hebrew poetics are not uncommon (UBS Freetown, 1994, Bamako, SIL under Goerling, etc.)

⁹ This course was taught at least 4 times At FATEAC, Faculté de Théologie Evangélique, where a joint SIL-UBS-FATEAC program was in place from September, 1999 till July, 2013.

¹⁰ All held under the auspices of United Bible Societies and/or Alliance biblique de Côte d’Ivoire and Burkina Faso: Ecclesiastes (SIL, Burkina Faso, 1992; Bingerville (2011), Job (SIL, Bouaké, 19**), Psalms (Bingerville, Joel (SIL, Abidjan 2012), Habakkuk (FATEAC, 2013).

¹¹ See also Ogden and Zogbo, *A Handbook on Song of Songs*, New York: UBS, 1998; Ellington, Margot and Zogbo, *Habaquq, un commentaire exégétique et linguistique* (digital, Paratext)

¹² We will address briefly the question of the nature of translation helps.

The context

Translator training occurs in many different contexts and at many different levels, some with individual translation teams or with a limited number of concerned individuals, some in more formal settings within institutions of higher learning, and some in the context of short or long workshops. Training can also be provided through effective helps (in print or on line, distance learning, handbooks¹³, articles, reference books, etc.). However in this short study, we will concentrate on suggestions on how to lead a successful poetry/music oriented workshop, with a goal to producing poetic texts and if possible, faithful Scriptural songs¹⁴.

1. Choosing the right workshop theme

To engage any audience, it is necessary to evoke *themes and issues which are pertinent to the hearers*. In conceiving a workshop which attempts to train translators in how to render poetry as poetry and how to create Scripture-based songs, it is crucial to identify source texts which *appeal* to the trainees, which *relate* to issues in their own lives and communities, i.e. texts capable of *inspiring emotion* and *commitment* (See Appendices 1 and 2, both showing the current relevance of poetry and song in the expression of deep political and moral commitment).

Looking back on a long list of translator training workshops over the past 30 years, it is clear that the workshops having the most impact are the ones whose themes and object of study had a *throbbing pertinence* for the participants and the target communities they represented. Our Ecclesiastes workshop, held at SIL, in Ouagadougou in 1992 seemed to respond to a deep-felt need, as our young, as well as old translators seemed to be posing serious ‘existential questions’¹⁵ in their own lives. A Joel workshop held in Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire in 2010, impacted participants even more: participants were openly touched by the divine promises of restoration found in this book, while the country was in the throes of yet another political crisis. Finally our Habakkuk workshop, recently held at FATEAC for Masters students and Bible society translation teams, spoke very powerfully to participants. Heavily traumatized by a particularly violent post electoral crisis, they ‘drank in’ the prophet’s message of steadfast faith in the face of travesties of justice and memories of horrific incomprehensible suffering.

Of course, the context or themes of a workshop do not have to be as dramatic as these, but organizers must give thought to what issues are pertinent to participants. Questionnaires may even be used to help workshop leaders-planners determine what book or selection of texts would most impact a given region, country, ethnic group or set of believers.

From experience it is clear that it is easier and more effective to deal with *shorter books* rather than longer ones¹⁶. When a short book is the object of study, the participants have time to digest a literary unit in its entirety. Especially if the goal is to produce a poetic version of a book and/or

¹³ Some UBS handbooks available on Paratext do provide helpful information on dealing with poetry, and some on a verse by verse basis. See below.

¹⁴ We will not attempt here any apologetic or defense of why this is important. Many programs and studies, especially in the US have been devoted to ‘worship’. See for example, Mentze (2012) for a study of how music can impact in American settings, as well as the huge project carried out by Krabill (et al, 20**), et al) only just discovered while writing this paper!

¹⁵ In at least one language, the publication of this selection raised important discussions among young people, and the selection was extremely popular.

¹⁶ In my experience workshops centered on longer books (Psalms, Job, Isaiah) did not seem to stir the same enthusiasm, certainly because the books presented material which was too long and varied.

create Scriptural songs, a shorter book gives translators the chance to ‘feel’ and ‘live’ the book they are translating. Minds have time to grasp what the biblical text is trying to say, hearts to be touched, emotions, time to become ‘engaged’. Creativity is not something produced ‘on demand’: it must be sparked and inspired. Sections of a longer book can also be used, but then a specific goal should be fixed. For example, a selection of the Psalms of David with a view to trauma healing could be a well defined, obtainable goal (See appendix 1, see separate file).

Of course, the choice of a theme or a text selection is not an end in itself. Rather the workshop *goal* is to *inspire and train translators*, convincing them that a poetic or lyric rendering of some texts is possible, as well as *offering tools* to be used throughout the long Bible translation process¹⁷.

2. Course content

At one workshop, a person commented, “I am from the old school. I do not believe poetic translation is a realistic goal, not here, not now, not without extensive research, in any case”¹⁸. This view may be correct if proper groundwork has not been laid or if certain tools are missing. That is why the course content of a workshop encouraging poetic transfer and song creation must be fine-tuned to meet the needs at hand. Before effective poetic transfer can take place, translators must have sufficient background and tools in several domains:

- a general—but at the same time—sophisticated understanding of **modern translation theory**, one takes into account *skopos* or discourse goal, one that acknowledges the role of *form* and *medium* in the expression and communication of meaning,
- biblical background or teaching providing a solid understanding of the message of the source text. There are no short-cuts here! This can only be obtained through **qualitative exegesis** based on biblical languages, as well as rhetorical and linguistic analyses of the source text,
- a thorough understanding of **poetic genres** and **rhetorical devices** which come into play in mother tongue.

2.1 Modern translation theory: believing the goal is possible

Before a workshop begins (or at least on day 1), leaders should ensure all participants are ‘on the same page’. Participants need to be encouraged to think about speech goals and/or author intent of the text before them. They must understand and ‘buy into’ the idea that the goal is to produce *aesthetically pleasing renderings*, using their own stylistic devices to evoke, at least in part, the same emotions as the source text.

It is only very rarely I have encountered a translator or consultant who does not immediately catch the vision of *rendering poetry as poetry*. However, if some participants are hesitant or skeptical, a group exercise should quickly convince them poetic transfer is not only important, but also possible. For example, participants could be asked to compare translations of the same text rendered in very different ways. Presenting an example of a very short text or even a verse will immediately show participants that the range of translation possibilities are indeed vast. Translators can themselves compare and discuss the renderings and convince themselves in the matter. Wendland (2009:260-262¹⁹) provides a stunning examples in Chewa drawn Ezek 37.1, as he presents (i) a 1922 vernacular version, (ii) a more recent 1998 version, and (iii) an amazing new poetic rendering:

¹⁷ While we have concentrated on Old Testament texts, I have seen the lessons learned in an OT context applied to the NT, where of course, many lyrical texts (hymns) are present (see bibliography).

¹⁸ My paraphrase of a participant’s recent comment.

¹⁹ He provides fairly literal back translations.

(i) The hand of Jehovah²⁰ rested on me,
and he went out with me in the spirit
of Jehova, and he placed me inside of
a ravine, it was full of bones;

(ii) The power of Chauta grab-
bed me, the Spirit of Chaua pick-
ed me up and set me down firm in the midst of
a ravine. The ravine was full up
with bones.

(iii)

Danaja lamphmvu la chauta lidandigwira—*gwi!*
Nyamu! Mzimu wa Mulunguwu wandinamaulatu,
Nukandiika pakat pachigwa chachikulu chotakaka.
Cinali chodzaza ndi mafupa okhaokha ali *mbwee!*

The mighty hand of Chauta grabbed me—*tightly!*
Up and away! The Spirit of God picked me up,
And put me in the middle of a large, broad valley,
It was filled up completely with bones all *scattered!*

Examples such as these could easily incite very long and lively discussions on how poetic transfer is possible, how effective such a rendering could be, what an impact it could have on the community, etc.²¹ See appendix 2)

Another strategy might be to invite artists to the workshop (or play recorded CDs or videos), helping participants to become convinced of the impact that non print media, and more specifically, lyric renderings of Scripture in song form, can have in their own communities. My experience has often been that upon hearing messages in this powerful way, people are often lost for words. More than once, hearers have simply looked me in the eye, long and hard, before they could find any words to express how deeply they were touched.

2.2 Qualitative exegesis

Exegesis is at the heart of any Bible translation. Especially in the case of the more difficult poetic books, translators and even qualified exegetes need detailed exegetical teaching on the texts to be rendered. These teaching sessions should:

- always be presented top-down,
- be context-sensitive and historically accurate,
- take as its reference the source text,
- be linguistically sound,
- be accompanied by understandable literary/rhetorical analyses,
- include theological/exegetical discussions required for an understanding of the text, and
- include discussions of translation problems, with possible solutions being proposed.

Top-Down Analyses

To understand a book, it is necessary to understand its major thrust, themes, and means of expression. Usually before coming to a workshop, participants are asked to *read the book in question in its entirety*. If possible this reading should be *in one sitting*, so that the full impact of the book can be felt. It is also important to ask translators to read the text in at least two to three versions, one with a more literary/literal rendering and at least one in a more common language/dynamic version. We often encourage translation teams to consider using the texts under study in their private or group devotions prior to arrival. The

²⁰ Transliterated in Chewa *Yehova*.

²¹ It goes without saying that the example of even this one verse could be used to teach a myriad of other principles: using an indigenous name for YHWH, rather than a transliteration, the added specific-generic shift for variation (*Chauta-God*), the return to a closer rendering ‘the mighty *hand* of Chuata’, the importance of lining up breath groups, i.e. the importance of format, the amazing sounds of the ideophones, alliterations, assonances and repetition, etc.

more translators understand and ‘feel’ the ‘target text’, the more inspired they will be to do qualitative and creative translation work.

Presenting ‘Top-down’ means beginning with a global overview of the text as a unit. Such discussions do not need to be long and drawn out, nor boringly academic. After some introductory remarks, an interactive discussion can seek to answer the following questions:

- What is the overall message? What response was the message intended to evoke?
- Who was the messenger? Who was the audience?
- What did you notice about how the message was communicated?
- How do the versions treat/format the text? (narrative vs. poetic)

The leader-teacher of course may need to ‘fill in the blanks’, all the while instilling healthy and affirming attitudes, such as:

- Yes, there are *options* in translation approaches and presentations (we, the translators, have *choices* in regard to genre & format),
- Yes, the message is *difficult*, perhaps even very difficult! Yes, we *need help*, but that is why we are here!
- There are *discernible* repetitive *themes*. Yes, even we have been able to figure out some parts of the message on our own!!!

From then on, discussions continue to be top-down, based on linguistic and literary analyses. Exegetical teaching should never be a simple verse-by-verse running commentary. The unified text is first presented, including a discussion of its literary context and its structure. Then the rest of the workshop ‘unfolds the text’, *literary section by literary section*, with each one section being treated in function of its internal (logical) structure and specific themes. Within each section, smaller units are examined, in the case of poetic texts, this being strophe by strophe.

In this approach it is important to periodically and at the end of the exercise (and indeed at the end of the workshop), *underline recurring themes and major goals of the text*.

Context sensitive and historically accurate

Whether on the first day or prior to arrival, translators must receive information on the historical, socio-cultural background of the text to be rendered. But the focus is not on teaching complicated biblical or historical facts, with conflicting chronological scenarios and/or theories of various stages of text composition²². Rather, translators need information which brings to light *facts helping to interpret, understand, and ‘live’ the text*. For a book like Habakkuk this means, not so much ‘who is Habakkuk?’ (about we know next to nothing), but what were conditions like during the prophet’s lifetime? Who are the Babylonians? What is their *modus operandi*? Who is the book addressed to? What is the state of mind of the community receiving this message?

To supply background, we usually ask participants to read as many *Bible introductions* to the book as they can find, in whatever languages they can read, prior to arriving or upon arrival at the workshop. Participants can themselves answer these questions, again with leader-teachers filling in the blanks as needed.

²² It is of course helpful in translators know that a title or even a whole section might have been added by an editor (Habakkuk 1.1, chapter 3). But emphasis should be on the canonical form of any text, not some hypothetical one.

At times translators are astonished to discover similarities between cultural practices in the Scripture and in their own cultures. In Africa, practices such as circumcision, polygamy, ritual sacrifices, as well as notions of impurity, ‘indentured’ slaves and ‘redeeming’ strategies have close parallels to those found in the OT. This kind of comparative thinking is to be encouraged, and it always makes for very lively discussion. But translators also need to be reminded of the *historical* and *temporal distance* between their culture and the biblical one. We teach that historically accurate expressions or generic substitutes, rather than wholesale cultural adaptations are more honest than inaccurate cultural substitutions²³.

Reference to source text and use of Hebrew

All translators now have access through Paratext to the source text and an appropriate interlinear. Some consultants/organizations may believe that discussions of Hebrew should be restricted to those who have had special training in this area. But we have found that especially in Africa, translators want to know all they can about biblical languages. Today in many teams, there is at least one member (usually the exegete) who has some Hebrew training. Thus in discussing Hebrew poetry, it may be possible to make reference to a *limited number of Hebrew terms and structures*, if leader-teachers are careful to use *accessible language* and *Roman script*. We have found that people *with no Hebrew* can learn *a great deal about Hebrew poetry*, including parallel structures, focusing strategies, discourse particles, conjunctions, enabling them to be far better interpreters and translators of the Bible. All translators can learn to identify and refer to important discourse markers and conjunctions, for example, *hinneh* ‘behold’, *nah* ‘please’, *waw* ‘and, or, but’, and *ki* ‘for’, ‘because’, ‘yes’, ‘indeed’²⁴, as well as key terms such as *hesed* ‘lovingkindness’, *elohim* ‘God/god’), etc.

Participants often enjoy hearing the Hebrew text read out loud, whether or not they understand it. Reading a short psalm or strophe of a text can show the rhythmic nature of the text and thus be a source of inspiration to all.

But extreme care must be taken to never exclude or belittle participants without Hebrew background. The workshop leader needs to monitor the teaching and immediately stop a teacher who is quoting Hebrew too liberally or without explanation. Those who have less formal education need to feel on equal footing with those who have more formal training²⁵.

Appropriate linguistic and rhetorical analyses

Exegesis is not just reading a verse, attempting to explain its meaning or commenting on its textual problems. Exegesis for translators means *unraveling* what is happening in each sub-text, including how linguistic structures and rhetorical devices are used at the service of the meaning and/or message²⁶. See section 4 for what skills are needed for poetry.

Exegetically and theologically sound explanations

²³ Cultural notes or explanations in the glossary are greatly encouraged. In this day and age when virtually all cultures are aware of the otherness of neighboring groups and beyond, it seems wise to respect biblical culture and present the foreignness they represent. Of course this does not exclude specially adapted versions, if a solid translation already exists.

²⁴ We regularly teach translators to stop at every ‘for’ (‘car’ in French) in OT poetry to ask themselves what is the meaning? Why is this particle here? What does my language cry out for here?

²⁵ From my experience, translators profit far more from learning *about* Hebrew stylistic devices in a language they can understand (French, English) than from courses which ‘teach them’ Hebrew (for example, the Hebrew alphabet, acquisition of common words, etc.). I have even at times found that these ‘quick fix’ workshops give false confidence to translators and end up slowing down the work.

²⁶ Zogbo, 2003.

As noted above, a workshop whose goal is to produce poetry and/or song must first and foremost provide *solid exegesis* of the target text. Though some may balk at this agenda²⁷, we believe *every exegetical issue* in the text must be addressed, especially recurring *key terms* and *names of God*.

If there is not sufficient time within the workshop framework to address all the issues, major exegetical problems can be highlighted and others left for translators to explore on their own. They can be directed to consult various helps (on line in Paratext, printed handbooks, commentaries, etc.). But leader-teachers should take care as to which commentaries are recommended. Much time can be lost wading through non helpful commentaries. Leader-teachers should identify those helps which pay attention to poetic structures and devices and address important translation issues.²⁸.

Translation problems

As strophes and individual verses are analyzed and exegeted, translation problems can be identified and solutions proposed. In workshops it is good to let participants share their own proposals, which can be evaluated on the spot by peers, as well as commented on by leader-teacher-consultants.

Of course what would most aid translators are *up-to-date quality book by book*²⁹ helps in whatever format, covering linguistic, exegetical, theological, and translation issues, but also speaking to issues of genre, media, and poetic transfer. These could be consulted prior to arrival (used in draft preparation) or upon arrival (with each team or participant receiving a print or on line copy). We have found such written helps to be essential in ensuring that all aspects of exegesis and translation are covered. They reinforce the workshop program. They also help TCs, especially TCs in training, in their workshop preparation, both for teaching and checking³⁰.

3. Practical matters

For a poetic/song creation workshop to be a success, a number of practical issues must be considered.

²⁷ It is amazing how many translation consultants or helps writers think this is an impossible task. But try explaining this to translators and even consultants who depend on such helps, and who regularly complain, ‘the handbook did not even think about addressing this issue!’ (this comment is from a former handbook editor, author, and user: myself) .

²⁸In many of the older the UBS handbooks, such issues may be marginalized or ignored. For example, we would not want translators to follow the advice found in the introduction of the old Habakkuk handbook, italicized below (italics, LZ, Clark and Hatton, 1989), despite its very solid scholarship and counsel elsewhere in the book:

The whole of the book of Habakkuk (except 1.1; 2.6a; and 3.1) is set out as poetry in RSV In TEV, only 3.2-19 is set out in this way. As with the Book of Nahum, translators should decide for themselves what parts of this book are suitable for poetry in their own languages. *In most cases chapters 1 and 2 will need to be translated into prose.* Since chapter 3 is a psalm, many translators will wish to handle it in the same way as they handle the Book of Psalms²⁸.

25 years later, the newer French helps on this book encourages (with the exception of the narrative introductions) a *poetic rendering of the entire book*, offering 15 pages of introductory material (instead of 2), including a presentation of Hebrew poetic features with specific examples from this book, along with a discussion of names of God found in this book. See the resource PARATEXT HBKFR, <http://paratext.org/>.

²⁹ We have often also proposed an online system which would address issues by topic: parallelism, repetition, names of God, both globally and then book specifically. As yet, we know of no system which can supply needed helps in this way.

³⁰ The Habakkuk helps in French was supplied to TC consultants in training as well as to participants at this workshop.

Length of workshop

Time needed for a poetic/song-oriented workshop depends on several factors determined by:

- the amount of material to be translated poetically,
- the amount of material transferred into poetry-song,
- the background of the participants, and
- the amount of prep time and work accomplished by participants before the workshop

If the goal is to render a short book in poetic form (Joel, Habakkuk), a one week workshop can be held. This becomes even more feasible if translators come with a draft. If the workshop is primarily a song production workshop, a longer workshop may be needed, for example, anything from 10 to 21 days. This is because translations should be checked *before* song production begins.

Workshop length is also determined in function of the translators' backgrounds. For the Habakkuk workshop, with the exception of one or two people, the 25+ participants already had some training in translation of Hebrew poetry and had experience in rendering poetic texts. Most had studied genre in their language. One week was perhaps slightly short for the recent Habakkuk workshop. 10 days would have allowed us to better interact with songs created after the translation exercise. If participants have no poetic background or translation experience in poetry, a longer workshop should be envisioned, with one week devoted to background learning and then perhaps 2 weeks to the translation and poetry-song creation.

Workshop participants

Who should attend such workshops? Should participation be limited to only 'poets'? The answer is a resounding 'No!' With the immense task of translating OT poetry, not to speak of NT hymns and prayers, the entire team needs to be trained. All team members need to understand the issues and goals involved in poetic transfer, and perhaps more importantly, they need to learn to *function together as a team*. As Nida and Wendland have noted, a workshop or any type of extended training cannot turn an individual into a poet, but it can *sensitize* those involved in translation (Wendland 1989:233). In the Western world, art is often an individual endeavor and/or a question of individual taste, but in Africa and elsewhere, aesthetic values are defined through consensus of the community³¹. Thus 'non-poets' play a major and critical role in evaluating and improving the work³².

The actual number of workshop participants may vary from very few (3-4 people, i.e. one team) to many (30-50 participants), with numerous teams and/or countries being represented. However, participant numbers should be decided in *function of teacher-consultant availability and ratios*. It is wise to have one consultant for every two-three teams.

The profile of teacher-leaders

³¹ As early as 1948, Doke has noted that certain Bantu speakers 'have the germ of literary criticism in their very blood. Discussions on features of the spoken word 'provide hours of entertainment around the hearth or camp fire in Central Africa'. (reported in Finnegan, 1970: 68).

³² I was privileged to spend one week working with *Parole de Vie*'s drafter, Sister Lydie Riviere, checking her *français fundamental* renderings of the Psalms. The exegesis in her first draft was excellent, but many of the renderings not poetic. Though neither a native French speaker nor a poet, I was able to help her, psalm after psalm, to find more poetic ways of rendering the text in simple French. The adage, 'two heads are better than one' is especially true in this type of 'creative writing'.

There are a number of qualities teachers at such workshops should have. The first is that they must themselves be thoroughly convinced that poetic transfer is possible and that song is an important means of Scripture communication. Teacher-leaders of such workshops should also have:

- a love for and some knowledge of Hebrew poetry,
- some knowledge of biblical languages (Hebrew, Greek, as needed),
- some theological background,
- some linguistic expertise,
- some experience in rendering (or helping others render) poetry as poetry,
- some experience in checking poetic materials,
- some interest in using indigenous music (if not formal ethno-musicological training)

(or a real willingness to acquire some of these competencies). No workshop should be held without at least *one experienced and committed Bible translation consultant*, someone who has some level of poetic skill, if not in actually writing poetry, at least in understanding, analyzing, and criticizing it. Consultant trainees should be carefully picked so that they adhere to the goals of the workshop. If one of the goals is song creation, hopefully there will be overlapping skills in participating translation consultants and ethnomusicologists. However, if staff availability is limited, the presence of a qualified translation consultant has highest priority. This is because like all extra biblical products (Bible book introductions, study notes, print or non-print selections), Scriptural song creation is very dangerous territory. This is the place where personal ideologies, church doctrines, or cultural biases frequently emerge³³. While community representatives seem naturally disposed to propose appropriate melodies and idiomatically worded lyrics for songs, it takes a highly skilled and experienced translation consultant to judge *whether the art product conforms to a global and the more specific Scripture message*³⁴. The support of an ethnomusicologist is of course highly desirable³⁵, but a workshop of this nature should **never take place without a qualified TC**.

Having said this, we of course must ask, how do we train TCs to become qualified in this area?

Teaching style and general workshop ‘ambiance’

Ideally teacher-leaders can be would always exhibit humility, humor, and pedagogical skill. It goes without saying that a workshop oriented towards creativity needs a *non pressured inter-active teaching environment*. Students should be challenged to think ‘on their feet’ as well as be free to ask pertinent and even difficult questions. Teacher-leaders need to project an attitude of ‘we are all in this together’, ‘we are all learning together’.

³³ Ogden, ‘Ideology’ ***UBS, Phil Noss, ed.

³⁴ See Hodgson and Soukup. We personally believe that TCs who are closer to the target culture may be far more apt than those who are further away. This means TCs from developing countries need urgently to be trained, not just in translation principles, but more specifically in media, poetic transfer, and song creation.

³⁵ My personal view on this and related issues is somewhat divergent from SIL approaches of the past. I believe that the community can be trusted to move ahead with such projects as translation and song creation without extensive prior studies done by expatriates. Many issues can be or have been locally addressed and resolved: linguistic issues involving orthography, sentence structure are usually resolved by national or government agencies and native intuition. Music choices belong in the community. Linguists and ethnomusicologists need to be called in to ‘fine tune’ native speaker awareness and provide teaching in higher level notions (for example, discourse features of mother tongue and source text, ways to preserve song traditions, etc.)

The workshop mood should be one in line with the seriousness of the task and topic. But this does not mean there cannot be light-hearted moments. When lectures seem too long, they may be interrupted ('à la africaine') by a song break, especially a rousing song in mother tongue! [SPOT 2]

Keeping to a well defined schedule puts people at ease. Frequent breaks and nourishing meals (served on time) frees up the spirit for more serious concentration during work-time. Workshop conditions (meeting room arrangements³⁶, air conditioning, internet access) should be standard or, if at all possible, even above standard!

Team spirit and group interaction should be encouraged. In Africa, this is often the best setting for learning and creativity. Leader-teacher-consultants need to immediately identify talents of the participants and bring them to the forefront. Thus if an exegete has very good Hebrew, s/he can be asked to read selections out loud. If someone is good at historical facts, s/he can be asked to summarize the background of a section or book. Participants with poetic and/or musical gifts should be encouraged to share their works aloud and their talents should be appropriately acknowledged. All can become poetic and music critics. Degrading comments are of course banned and constructive criticism and positive suggestions encouraged. Teacher-leaders can allow for different types of skills and 'intelligences' to emerge, ensuring interaction on an equal basis³⁷.

If the workshop is a large one, checking sessions may need to be organized in groups, according to language families³⁸. [SPOT 3] Group activities should be encouraged at every level. Homework may involve group assignments. Participants need to be encouraged to present their work to the group and the group needs to learn how to evaluate positively.

Finally, leader-teacher-consultants need to remember that such workshops are themselves a *Scripture-based activity*. If texts and themes are well chosen (i.e. community-driven), despite any weaknesses in organization, staffing or other matters, these events can be times of real *spiritual inspiration* and *renewal*. Devotions do not have to be long and belabored. Emphasis and focus (in terms of time management) should be on the work goals. But well organized short words of encouragement, 10-15 minute 'spots', led by workshop participants (duly forewarned before arrival), followed by brief prayers (for daily sessions and close-to-home issues) can set the day off positively. Almost all participants are gifted in some way or at least enjoy learning songs in other languages. A closing prayer at the end of the day, with a song in mother tongue, is a good way to cap off each day [SPOT 4].

The final day of the workshop can/should be turned into a *celebration*. Hard work is behind us! The workshop can end with a closing ceremony (including distinguished guests), the distribution of diplomas of participation, a special meal, and a time for testimony and thanks. A group picture can add to the 'memorability' of the workshop.

Timing and frequency

As poetic books make up over 1/3 of the Old Testament, one poetic workshop will certainly not be enough to train translation teams. The ideal would be to have a poetic transfer workshop concentrating on one book, once per year, beginning with easier texts (a Psalms selection) and moving through texts of medium difficulty (Joel), on to the hardest ones (Job). This is the kind of learning that builds through time and

³⁶ Round-table arrangements are user friendly, but not always possible when participant numbers are high.

³⁷ See the discussion in Wendland (2006: 60-63) who notes that for training to be most effective, it should be interactive, inductive, indigenized, communal, developmental, and applied.

³⁸ In our most recent workshop, I tried to marry consultant backgrounds to checking groups, Kru with Kru, Kwa with Kwa. As the most experienced consultant, I dealt with the 'overlap' and mixed groups.

experience, and can even profit from ‘times away’ to digest and apply what was learned. It is very helpful when the same participants and the same teachers can meet to follow a long term training schedule. The idea is to *build competency through time*.

4. Poetry background

Ideally for a poetic book to be successfully transferred/translated into a corresponding poetic form in the target language, translators must be led to understand or discover:

- the workings of Hebrew poetry, i.e. the rhetorical devices in the target Hebrew text,
- what genres their language possesses, what characteristics these genres demonstrate and, what stylistic devices characterize various poetic speech/song types in their language.

The best scenario is of course one in which participants come to the workshop with this background already present. This was the case for some of our participants at our recent Habakkuk workshop. The 7 MA candidates from FATEAC had already profited from semester long courses in Hebrew poetry and Hebrew discourse, and were concurrently taking a general course on discourse, looking at strategies in their own languages. But in almost all workshops, the background of participants is uneven. Fortunately, there are a number of ways to remedy this situation. In our Habakkuk workshop, we asked each of our MA students to present one feature of Hebrew poetry [SPOT 5]. For the majority of the participants, this was a review, but for others, this enabled them to acquire some of the knowledge and vocabulary needed for the workshop.

The topic of poetry is extremely vast, which is why leader-consultants should program topics which can *directly help* translators understand the meaning of a poetic text. Most crucial topics include³⁹:

- **Genre:** understanding the concept of genre, competency to identify goal of speaking and stylistic features associated with particular genres,
- **Parallelism** (types): including various classification methods (Lowth, Kugel, alternative⁴⁰).
- **Chiasm:** identifying its presence, recognizing its structure and especially determining its function in a given text (unit introductions and conclusions, role of underlining, emphasis of theme, etc.)
- **Strophe:** how to recognize the building blocks of poetry in biblical Hebrew and mother tongue poetic texts
- **Inclusio**
- **Refrain**
- **Enallage:** abrupt shifts in person
- **Figures of speech:** mainly concentrating on metaphor and comparison
- **Word play**
- **Sound plays:** rhythm, alliteration, assonance, with a brief mention of rhyme
- **Repetition:** its role according to genre
- **Rhetorical questions**

³⁹ For these standard features, see, for example, Zogbo and Wendland, chapter 3, or Zogbo, *Découvrons la Poésie biblique*, (forthcoming) for a sample of what can be taught.

⁴⁰ Zogbo and Wendland, *Ibid*.

In each case, translators must be able to identify these stylistic devices in the source text, either through Hebrew or a more literal translation. If a simple review is called for, 10 minute ‘spots’ would be able to cover these topics in the space of a morning. But if the material is new, it is far better to scatter it out over a one week or two week time period, addressing issues either in terms of their ease of comprehension (easiest presented first) or according to need (concepts introduced as needed in the discussion of the daily target text). It is also possible to send readings on Hebrew poetry with exercises to teams before their arrival at the workshop. There are, however, certain advantages to introducing (or reviewing) all the concepts at the same at the beginning of the workshop, so participants can actively use this terminology in workshop discussions and in checking sessions with their TC. Of course, good teachers will allow participants to ‘try for themselves’, asking them what rhetorical devices they found in the texts dealt with each day.

Again, we are not just teaching facts to be memorized, but trying to build attitudes and analytic capacities to be used well after the workshop is over. When presenting these various rhetorical devices, it is important to point out two very important principles:

- One rhetorical device can have *multiple functions* in a single language, book, or genre. For example, repetition can underline a theme, play a structural role (mark the beginning or close of a unit), express irony, or provide unity to a text, etc. Chiasm can focus on a point or open or close a poem, etc.
- *Rhetorical devices cannot automatically be transferred* from Hebrew to the target language. Translators must understand the *function* of rhetorical devices in source and target to determine if their roles match. When they do not, translators must seek alternate means to express the pragmatic function of a stylistic device. For example, repetition in Hebrew may be realized as focusing in the target language for example.

These basic principles must be reiterated and underlined throughout the workshop.

4.1 The notion of genre

One of the most useful exercises to carry out prior or during a poetry/song workshop is to study the **genres** in the source (biblical Hebrew) and target languages. Translators should quickly be able to examine a source text, identify its major genre, goal, and major rhetorical features, leading to reflection on how to best render the text in translation. Will there be a transfer of genres (a praise song in the OT taking on the form of a praise song in the mother tongue) or will adaptations have to be made?

Prose vs Poetry

Putting current debates aside, in all our experience dealing with translators from diverse language families across West Africa, we have never once had a problem with translators immediately understanding this basic division in genre. Translators can readily identify what is narration and what is song. Most also quickly understand the notion of a *continuum* which allows for the variation in genre acknowledged by many scholars (e.g. Wendland, 1994):

narrative prose poetic prose narrative poetry poetry

←-----→

Poetic Genres

In Africa, where poetry's main medium is song, the notion of poetic genre is virtually a given. All translators, whatever their level of education, can almost immediately and with very little prompting, identify *poetic genres* in their own languages. In less than one hour, most can provide a list of song types, oftentimes even putting a name to many of their song genres. Identifying distinguishing characteristics of each type may take a little more training and reflection, but is a very realistic exercise for almost all translators. Emphasis should be on identifying *what makes the genres different*. For example, they can ask themselves the following questions:

- In what context is the song sung?
- What is the goal of the song?
- Who sings the song?
- What are the characteristics of the text?
 - how long is the song? (comparatively, for example, a praise song compared to a work song)
 - how many strophes?
 - is there a refrain or not?
 - is parallelism a factor in song composition? If so, what type of parallelism?
 - is repetition appreciated or avoided in this genre?
 - is the language concrete or abstract (figurative)?
 - are rhetorical questions used? To what end?
 - are there special sound devices at work? Something like rhyme? or verse final particles (ex. *oo*), or syllable constraints within a line?
 - any other distinguishing stylistic features?

If translators know their language well and/or have collected data, looking at these questions can take as little as a day or two's work. Of course, for some this could turn into a Masters thesis topic!⁴¹

Charting the genres is a helpful way to display the results of such a study. Below we quote results from a homework assignment recently given to FATEAC students.

⁴¹Ntouame 2004..

CHART OF IFE GENRES by Sena Komi

Name in your language	Name in French	Goal of speaking	Context	Singers	Stylistic features
orĩ-àgbàdà	song of joy	to praise (or denounce) certain social situations	Celebrations, two days after a burial	A man and a woman singer, taken up by others	2 verses, a refrain, repetition, tam-tam, gong, castanettes
orĩ-ṣwá-òtsùkpá	song by the light of the moon	to praise one's lover or refuse a 'pretendant'	When the moon is full!	Reserved for women, especially young unmarried women	2+ strophes a refrain rhythmic hand clapping, repetition, singers in a circle
orĩ-akpokpo	Hunting song	to praise the exploits of a hunter	Ceremonies when a hunter kills a lion, an elephant, a buffalo, etc .	1 lead singer, then song sung by other hunters	One verse and one refrain, repetition, tam-tam, gong, castagnettes
orĩ-àtrukpe	Song of death	To console the grieving family	During the funeral wake	1 lead singer (male), song then sung by others (men and women)	An introduction, one verse, refrain of one line repetition, tam-tam, gong, castagnettes
orĩ-ifá	Song of the Fa	To praise Fa	Worship of Fa	1 man leading, then taken up by the 'devins'	

GENRES IN KONABERE by Diarra Djele John

Name in your language	Name in French	Goal of speaking	Context	Singers	Stylistic features
bəbətini	Song meant to entertain	To express collective feelings	Young girls' dance time during a full moon	Group (unlimited number) Reserved for women and young girls	Refrains, repetition
yɛlɛtini	Panegyric	To reveal historical facts for initiates	Ceremonies for young initiates.	Songs are sung by a group of old women or old men	Parallelism, repetition, refrains
gburatini	Song meant to entertain	To express the collective feelings of the initiates	Honor the fetich called Do	Men & women	Parallelism, refrains
warakamatini	Song of initiates and non-initiates	préparer les non-initiés à intégrer la vie des initiés.	Religious ceremonies of integration	Only men	Archaic language, refrains, repetition
kɛmɛntini	Drinking songs	To express collective or individual feelings.	Many occasions, such as at funerals	1+ Any person drinking dolo	Repetition,; refrain

Biblical Genres

There are, of course, almost unlimited criteria and numbers of ways biblical scholars categorize genres in the Old Testament. Gunkel and Westermann, for example, propose in great detail many different categories for the poem/songs in the book of Psalms. Studying the actual Hebrew names in the Bible given to various genres constitutes another approach⁴². But for the purposes of Bible translation and translator training, once the basic prose-poetry distinction is understood, genres types can be reduced to a few, namely the ones which will resonate most with those found in African languages. Teacher-leaders should concentrate on the *notion of genre* and *goal of speaking*, rather on the details⁴³. Many general

⁴² Zogbo and Wendland, pp. **.

⁴³ One can ask 'what novel types exist in French/English/Spanish? What do you read?/watch on TV?' But this may prove unfruitful, as many university level students do not seem to read for pleasure. Understanding genres through mother tongue songs is a much better way to teach this concept.

poetic ‘types’ in the OT which will find easy and natural correspondents in African languages, for example:

- Songs of mourning, funeral laments (2 Samuel 1.19-27)
- Praise songs (many Psalms)
- Love songs (Song of Songs)
- Social critique songs (sections out of Amos)

To this we might add proverbs, which is in Hebrew and many languages, share a high number of features with the category ‘poetry’. The leader of the poetry-song workshop can expand on and/or refine categories according to linguistic families represented at the workshop and the book or portion of Scripture under study.

Of course the same questions noted above for target language genres apply to source text analysis.

Marrying biblical and target genres

There are many scenarios which can arise as a result of these studies and reflections. In terms of goal of speaking, there can be an almost perfect ‘marriage’ between primary genres. In other words, a dirge or eulogy as in 2 Samuel may find an almost perfect match in a funeral song in the target language. Parts of Song of Songs may find near perfect matches in love songs in the target language (even to the point of having a ‘physical’ chorus present such as the ‘Daughters of Jerusalem’). The biting condemnations in Amos of the ‘fat cows of Bashan’ may also find its perfect match in mother tongue songs of irony.

Translators first have to decide if poetic transfer is possible by seeing *if the goal of speaking is the same*. Then it is up to translators to attempt the difficult task of using rhetorical devices in their own language to produce a faithful rendering of the biblical message (and if possible, the emotion) in their own language. The closer translators can get to producing genres in their own languages,

- the more pleasure readers or hearers will have in reading or hearing the text,
- the easier the text will be memorized,
- the greater the impact the translation will have.

If there is not a direct match, the translation task becomes more difficult and understanding the message becomes increasingly difficult. This is why, for example, American readers have trouble accessing books like Habakkuk or Amos. Lauren Bliese (2000) points out some humorous mismatches which occurred during translation in the Afar language from Ethiopia, with praise songs for camels proving definitely not appropriate for divine praise! We have found that native intuition is an almost infallible guide in determining what constitutes matches or mismatches. Amazingly, as the Prophet Harris began his ministry among the Didas, even though he did not speak this language, he intuitively rejected a love song genre in favor of a praise one (Krabill: 6)⁴⁴ For such choices, community consensus should of course play a major role, with the consultant playing a clearly passive observer/guide role.

Another basic principle cannot be over-emphasized: gone are the days when target audiences are considered ‘unsophisticated’. Virtually any culture in today’s world understands that other cultures have aesthetic values different from their own, as well as varying strategies of expression (for example, in the

⁴⁴ Though not Dida, the Prophet Harris did from the same linguistic and ethnic pool, the Grebos, another Kru group.

expression of sadness, social criticism, praise). With this knowledge, it is up to the community (through its representative translation committee) to determine how far they want their translation to go in terms of domestication or foreignization. This local committee can itself set the limits and goals of this poetic exercise⁴⁵. Certainly some features of Hebrew poetry will ‘seep through the seams’ of various poetic renderings, but this perhaps should not be seen as a problem, but rather as an inevitable consequence of inter-cultural communication, to be appreciated rather than condemned.

Other poetic features

For other features of Hebrew poetry and how to teach them (i.e. parallelism, refrain, and other features listed above), see Zogbo and Wendland (2000). However one domain warrants special commentary, as it has a very important bearing on rendering poetic texts and songs. This is the feature of repetition.

Repetition

Whether in poetic transfer or in song creation, the presence of repetition must be carefully analyzed and appropriately used. In both source and target languages worldwide, this feature can have many pragmatic functions within a single language depending on genre and other factors. In the same language, repetition can be an underlining device, a structural device and a conveyor of both positive and negative emotion. Translators, exegetes, and consultants must therefore *avoid imitating, in an ad hoc manner, repetition of the source text*. At the same time, they must be free to use repetition as frequently as is warranted in the translation, at times might even creating more repetition than in the source!

Translation consultants need to gain experience in dealing with poetry, especially learning to judge what constitutes an admissible addition/repetition and an inadmissible one. Repetition in target translations which go beyond that of the source text can be justified if it does not change the meaning. In some languages, repetition is needed to create poetic lines, to make the translation more aesthetically pleasing and in some cases, to even better render the meaning of the source text. In their study of a poetic rendering of the Gospels in a Swahili dialect⁴⁶, Noss and Renju give a stunning example of this process in Matt 5.3 (2004:32):

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven (RSV)

Heri watu masini,	Happy are the poor,
Msskini was moyini,	The poor in heart,
Wana heri watu hao.	They have happiness these people.
Enzi ya mbingu ni yao.	The kingdom of heaven is theirs.

Here nearly half of the elements are repetitive, but the repetition in no way alters the core message. Rather it brings incredible beauty to the lines (which can be seen in the rhyme scheme AA, BB). Later we will see other examples of repetition which seem rather to complicate and skew the message of Scripture (section *.*).

Again, everything surrounding the study of poetry and song, be it in the Bible, in mother tongue or any national language, reinforces translators’ capacities to face this very difficult translation challenge. Given a minimum background and some chances to acquire experience, everyone’s abilities and competencies—

⁴⁵ In one Rwandan translation, guidelines for rendering poetry were established (Zogbo and Wendland, what was his name???*?). Such a committee could also address issues of genre, foreignization and domestication.

⁴⁶ This translation was carried out by the late president of Tanzania, Mwalimu Julius Nyerere. Just imagine what impact poetic renderings and Scriptural songs would have if this were a more common phenomenon!

translators, exegetes, and consultants alike—improve. This is a domain where there is a steady upward learning curve, one which can continue throughout life!

5. Song creation

Song brings supplementary elements to any poem. The tone and nuances of the human voice, the intensity of its emotion, variations of loudness-softness, swift-slow speech, ‘pregnant pause’—all these add to the meaning of a poetic message. In a live face to face ‘performance’, body language (the face, arms, etc.) is another key allowing the audience⁴⁷ to enter into the poet’s world and better perceive his or her message.

It is important for the receiving community (and the organizations that support the project) to clearly define and agree on the *goals of song creation*. Is it a question of creating a *true Scriptural song* or a more general *Christian song* (worship, marriage, etc.). While not excluding the latter (songs loosely tied to a Scriptural text), we would like to suggest that the creation of ‘true’ Scripture songs, is the ‘safer route’ for a number of reasons:

- Scripture songs are easier to compose because the translated Scriptures provide a guideline for song composition.
- Scripture songs are safer for community consumption because non biblical reflection and personal doctrine (constituting huge temptations for any individual or group composer) are, if not excluded, kept to a minimum.
- Scripture songs are by far easier for consultants to check.
- Ethno-musicologists can comment on appropriate melody-rhythms and help evaluate the overall product.
- Fund-raisers may have more success finding financial backing for Scripture-based songs than for the production of more general Christian songs.

Finally, Scripture-based songs clearly *edify the Church of Christ* and thus can be an integral part of most outreaches. Unfortunately, in today’s world, Christian songs are oftentimes the only elements Christians really learn by heart. As these songs are repeated Sunday after Sunday or played on Christian radio stations, they impose their theology and mindset on those who use them. In the history of European hymn-writing, songs were very closely tied to Scripture, taking as examples the hymns written by Martin Luther and the Wesleys, as well as those found in the Presbyterian psalters. But today the situation is different. Alister Begg notes, for example, ‘In many cases. congregations have begun to sing about themselves and *how they are feeling*⁴⁸ rather than about God and His glory’⁴⁹. As my friend Joyce Carlson once quipped, ‘It’s all about me, Lord, it’s all about me’! Another friend, Eddie Arthur, bemoans (on facebook) songs he entitles ‘Jesus is my girlfriend’⁵⁰. Opting for the creation of Scripture-based songs puts defined limits on the song creation activity and actually allows for real ‘checking’ to take place. This checking includes not just the naturalness of wording and the beauty of a tune, but examination to see if the lyrics are truly faithful to the Scripture teaching as a whole.

If the choice is made to produce Scripture or Scripture-based songs, there are still many important issues which need to be dealt with:

⁴⁷ An audience could of course be one person: a baby listening to her grandma’s song.

⁴⁸ Italics mine.

⁴⁹ In Ferguson, Sinclair, ‘Christ Alone’, p. 2.

⁵⁰ blog of 29 May, 2013. He comments further that Luther and Wesley ‘believed that people learned theology from the songs they sung in Church. Which is one reason that they wrote such profound and Bible-soaked songs’. I like this last expression very much.

- **the crucial role of *translated* Scripture:** As we move more and more into a highly visual non print world, the temptation is to ‘go straight for the punch’. Why bother with classical Bible translation, so difficult, so time-consuming, when what we want is non print high impact ‘spots’, be they video, song, etc.?

The answer is clear: Christian song-writing and/or ‘regular’ song writing is one activity, but Scriptural song writing is another. While creativity and talent are needed for both endeavors, for Scriptural songs to qualify as such, they must be based on *approved Scripture renderings*. This means source Scriptures have been properly translated⁵¹ and checked and approved by qualified translation consultants. Thus sufficient preliminary research would have already been carried out on key terms and expressions, for example.

Note that Scripture is defined and interpreted by its context.

Another reason for songs to be created ‘off of’ real translations is that real translations *provide context* for appropriate interpretation/exegesis.

‘Quickie’ translations to ‘pull off’ a media product are definitely not to be encouraged!!!

- **the crucial role of the translation consultant:** No one involved in Bible translation of any type and/or Scriptural song creation can question the crucial role of *quality control*, especially of products that can, in our day and age, very easily, go ‘viral’ overnight⁵². Though there may be something to be gained by following as much as possible principles of localizations (Americans quality-controlling American products, Africans quality-controlling African products, etc.), an expert TC from any country should be able to weigh in on the fidelity and appropriateness of a Scriptural product from any other part of the world. (We do belong to the universal body of Christ)⁵³.

5.1 Song topics

In terms of song composition, Scriptures themselves are chock full of inspiration for any life event, crisis, or situation. However, it has been our experience that it is helpful for workshop leaders to *orient* participants to take up positive themes. At times, song topics can be very negative and slightly off the mark as far as the overall thrust of Scripture is concerned (several examples will be given below). Song writers may for various reasons not represent biblical truths in a balanced way. It is not just the words of

⁵¹ This means going through normal translation processes: 1st draft, second draft (team work), exegetical check, reviser check, testing, consultant check.

⁵² There has been some recent discussion concerning the evils of translation consultants playing the role of ‘gate-keeper’, but for me these discussions are simply ‘passé’. Euan Fry nearly 25 years ago says in regard to audio products (1999:27): We [TCs] are not “... ‘censors’ waiting to kill good and creative ideas, but... ‘guides’ seeking to assist in the working out of the ideas in a way that is faithful to the bible, and to the biblical authors and their messages”. For decades, ‘patronizing consultancy’ has been denounced, and in my personal experience, only rarely encountered.

⁵³ I am grateful to my friend Jean-Claude Loba-Mkole who helped me believe I could weigh in on African oriented issues even though I am (from some a genetic but not legal point of view) a non-African. In the domain of song, it is possible for non speakers of a language to be able to judge the quality and tone of a song even in languages they don’t understand. Who has not been touched by the joy of an Afro-cuban song in Spanish or the sadness of a love song in Brazilian Portuguese? In the same way, the spiritual tone of a message can often be discerned by non native speakers. Let us not close the doors to the inner connections of the gifts of the body of Christ across cultures.

the songs, but the actual choice of Scripture (or theme) that is important. This is why the presence of a leader-teacher-consultant is crucial to ensure that the overall messages of Scripture are being respected. Of course, it is best if products can be evaluated in groups, representing local communities, with a qualified consultant present. The consultant gives orientation as needed and can raise issues which the community can solve then and there. The consultants' role is to assist and train, never to dictate. Again, as noted above, 'we are in this together', 'we all have something to learn'.

Along these lines, we might cite the amazing Scripture CD produced by the Bible Society of Côte d'Ivoire in 2003 entitled *Protection*, meant to encourage believers during a traumatic time of war. The musical quality and the variation of musical styles on this CD are simply astounding. But we might question some of the Scripture choices, as relates to theme and message in this particular context⁵⁴. In one song from Isaiah 41, we hear straight Scripture, quoting the words of the Lord: 'I have chosen you, I have not rejected you...do not be afraid'. These are words worth singing. But the song goes on, quoting directly from the biblical text: 'I will make you a threshing machine ...you will tear apart mountains, you will tear them to pieces'. Then comes the refrain, inspired by the Scripture but not following it precisely (a certainly acceptable practice): 'you who suffer, you who are rejected by society, I will make you a threshing machine'. If a translation consultant had been present at the time of text choice and/or recording, the questions of theme and ambiguous language (clearly aggressive and in this context subject to misinterpretation) might have been addressed.

Søgaard notes 'Translation Officers should review the total presentation of the product to determine if it is faithful to the biblical passage and to assure themselves that it contains no inconsistent or contradictory material' (42-2). We, of course, agree, but would like to suggest that the consultant be part of the project *from its conception*, and be the one to accompany the project till its realization, at which time, the product will then be reevaluated before being tested and widely distributed.

5.2 The notion of re-creation

Transfer of poetic source texts into poetic forms and Scripture-based songs in mother tongue may not be so different from standard past and current practices around the world. Across Africa, for example, songs are not learned verbatim and repeated over and over, using the exact same words. Slight variations are allowed, artistic embellishments, added (Finnegan, 1970). These minor shifts are always present, and indeed, expected!⁵⁵. Thus in Africa, at least, singers and poets are used to keeping to a tune and a given content, all the while manipulating a phrase, changing one or two words per line, adding some little personal touch. Thus poetic transfer in Scripture translation and song creation may almost be thought of in these terms, or as we think of it in the Western world, as 'remakes'. Interestingly, in the non Western world, in traditional song 'creation' (as for Bible translation), the question of authorship is a non-issue!

In the 60's, translation scholars often spoke of *restructuring* a message, a term which seems to put the focus on linguistic manipulation of words. But in today's world and in a poetic, song-oriented (or perhaps straight translation?) context, it is perhaps more interesting to speak of *re-creation*, a term used first by Finnegan (1970), then more extensively by Sterk (19**) and others (**) in reference to Bible

⁵⁴ See Zogbo, 2005.

⁵⁵ Great research topics lie in this domain. We would hope people will do doctoral theses on how much variation or improvisation is allowed in a song presentation, what types of variation are allowed, etc. Such research would be invaluable, enabling us to better understand the art of oral literature and its transmission. Related topics for research might be: how do audiences judge the competencies of a singer, performer, or if the category exists, composer? What is beautiful in language X, Y, Z?

translation and poetic transfer. Considering such activities as re-creation (or as a ‘remake’) allows for quite a bit of liberty in composition. But again, as these are *Scripture products*, quality or ‘fidelity’ are issues control still must be an integral part of the process.

At times, the goal may be to create a series of songs related to a theme or destined to a particular event. Creating a unified CD on a given topic is a huge undertaking. We carried out such a project, attempting to create a CD to be played during the long wakes at Bete funerals (see Appendix 3). This experience revealed that even if the composer is given Scripture texts and a general theme to follow, s/he needs *time to digest the material*—not just days but weeks or months! A CD is an ensemble of songs and the song composer/singer/producer may want to purposely display unity and/or diversity in the areas of theme and style (rhythm, melody). The consultant-leader needs to be conscious of the composer-singer’s need for time, be it a group or individual project.

However, there are times when time is of the essence. Life (war and/or natural catastrophes) happens. If there are specific time constraints and there is no time to create Scripture songs (a very arduous task), an alternative is to do a musical instrumental CD, based on local music, with readings of relevant Scriptures. This can be particularly effective if the local music is well chosen and the translation is a strong (and where relevant) poetic one. Such products are very easy to produce and quite inexpensive.

In Côte d’Ivoire during the war, a print illustrated leaflet, *Hope in the Midst of Suffering*, was developed in French and distributed in the thousands. The advantage of working up such a model, approved by the consultant, then community-tested and proved, is that it can be adapted into various mother tongues. We actually recorded these Scripture passages, using various local musical backdrops (Baoule, Senufo, Jula, etc.), with readers speaking the texts. Most inexpensive and easiest is a simple one-voice reading, but much better results can be had with mixing men and women’s voices. Many have commented on how touching a woman’s voice is, especially in passages, say from Psalms, which are meant to comfort. Though in some projects we had to capitulate to community demands for men reading and women singing. Of course only consultant checked passages were used, and luckily in at least some cases, the texts were translated poetically. Though we would have loved to have the help of an ethnomusicologist in this endeavor, there was simply no time to plan well ahead. In the end, pastors and priests, translators and exegetes, were called in to suggest/approve background music and then the final product. [SPOT 6]

If this ‘shortcut’ approach is taken, project creators/composers/writers should avoid plopping down unrelated Scriptures out of context. There must be *a theme* and some *logic* to the presentation, again underlining the need for consultants to guide such projects. Appropriate transition materials can be inserted which can contextualize Scripture songs and/or readings. Such products (with a model which is somehow event-related) are much easier, quicker, and far less expensive to adapt and produce than individual ethnic-specific products. Of course, to have individual songs composed especially for each text (the Bete funeral tape) is ideal, but with lengthy texts and/or pressing deadlines, the ‘shortcut’ approach can be quite effective.

Practical examples

For the moment, we have no manual or guidebook in the creation or recreation of poetic texts into song⁵⁶. The major issues of poetic transfer are, we believe, adequately if perhaps briefly covered in Zogbo and Wendland, 2000 (see also Wendland, ****). Below, however, we try to show how the actual work of a consultant can be carried out, through the presentation of created songs and our analyses. As noted above, ideally critiques should be made in a group setting with the singer-composer and the consultant present. Unfortunately in the cases to follow, due to lack of time or other practical constraints, we were not able to

⁵⁶ We only recently discovered Krabill et al. 20**.

work through our critiques with the composers. This is indeed an essential part of the Scripture song creation exercise.

Old Testament songs based on poetic texts

In our Habakkuk workshop, from day 1, we asked the participants to be thinking about a song which this book would inspire. We did not prescribe any text, wanting participants to have complete freedom in their song creation. Some chose to compose a song based on one verse, others on several, yet others on themes (specific or general).

The texts chosen, the style, and the quality varied widely from participant to participant. If we had had time, each composer would have improved his or her song in light of the comments of their peers and the teacher-consultants⁵⁷. Below are some examples of first draft songs⁵⁸.

Song in Ife (Togo) by Komi Sena, based on Hab 2.4; 3.17-19

Refrain

Atsòtító gbódzú kànyìlì si.
Atsòtító nákó gbé náàyè.

The just perseveres (attaches his eye, ideophone *si*)
The just will stay alive (have life)⁵⁹

(1)

Egi-fìgì ña kò *soo*
Oko-egi-rèséè kò wà *soo*
Egi-òlìfì ña kò *soo*
Oko ña kò wà sã dzídzé *ró*
Àgùdà ña tá *nágbo*
Lalá ña tá *nágbo*.

The trees of fig are not flowering.
The tree of grape does not give fruit.
The trees of olive they do not flower.
The fields no longer (*ró*) produce good food.
The sheep are finished in the stable (*nágbo*)
The cattle are finished in the stable.

Refrain

(2)

Ayètíté-mi ti ñdì-òlódzò	My joy comes from the Lord
Ñ wé éwo-ireoo náatsùgbée òdáyé fee	I am happy (wash my head good) because of God
Ó fú mi nólà oo	He gives me salvation
òlódzò, òlá-mi, dzé àmí-mi	The Lord, my Lord, is my strength
Màa sáré kpára kíbí àgbàrĩ	I will run quick-strong like a deer
Màa rě nòkè ña oo	I will walk on the mountain (tops)

This is clearly an amazing song because it presents in a very clear way the despair of the situation and the hope that the Lord can bring. To me it is a very successful attempt at song creation. The verses zero in on some very key verses that the author/editor of Habakkuk himself emphasizes. The refrain put an accent on another key verse which links Habakkuk to the New Testament.

The composition is truly poetic, because it imitates the rhetorical stylistic device of parallelism obviously appreciated in Hebrew and Ife. We see remarkable cases of rhyme, often absent in African languages, but which apparently seems important in this language. In the first verse, note *soo* (X 3) rhyming with *ró* and *nágbo* in the last three lines. This verse is also characterized by assonance with an incredible number of alternation *a* and *o* sounds. In the second verse, the first two lines do not rhyme, but *oo*—*i*—*oo-i* close out the verse. The variants ‘Lord’ and ‘God’ add texture to the song, and the repetitive ‘The Lord, my Lord’ (justified by the text) beautifully imitates the style of many Hebrew parallelisms (generic, specific; generic, personalized).

⁵⁷ Unfortunately they received these comments with their grades.

⁵⁸ All translations from French to English by LZ.

⁵⁹ Compare ‘but the righteous will live by his faith’ (RSV), Hebrew ‘*emunah*’.

Our only female participant composed two songs, one of which also captures the striking contrast between desolation and hope which characterizes this book. She envisions this being sung accompanied by a traditional musical instrument:

Song in Abouré (Côte d'Ivoire) by Pasteur Gbeugré Pierrette

Abakúkú ééé	'Oh Habakkuk' (3 times)
Awulabo ééé	'What sadness/misery'
Abakúkú ééé	'Oh Habakkuk' (3 times)
apue ééé	'What suffering'
Abakúkú ééé	'Oh Habakkuk (3 times)
nyan ééé	'Oh Salvation !'
Abakúkú ééé '	'Oh Habakkuk' (3 times)
édé ééé	'Oh joy!'

The repetitive 'oh' (ééé) ensures the cohesion and the rhythm of the piece. The shortness of the text is striking, making us conclude that in this language, as in so many, 'less is more'. During the presentation, this song was also accompanied by a dance (which the song-writer directed), visually demonstrating the two emotions. [SPOT 7]

Other participants were struck by the positive traits of God, seen through the lines of this book. One decided to call upon Habakkuk and encourage him, by stating all the attributes of God:

Song in Diola-kassa (Sénégal) by Diatta Bernard [SPOT 8]

Oh Habakkuk,
The Lord is God.
Oh Habakkuk,
The Lord is God.
He will respond to your cry.

Oh Habakkuk,
The Lord is God.
Oh Habakkuk,
The Lord is God.
He is Holy God.

Oh Habakkuk,
The Lord is God
Oh Habakkuk,
The Lord is God.
He is the Savior.

Oh Habakkuk,
The Lord is God.
Oh Habakkuk,
The Lord is God
He is the just Judge.

Oh Habakkuk,
The Lord is God.

Oh Habakkuk,
The Lord is God
He is the one who delivers.

Oh Habakkuk,
The Lord is God.
Oh Habakkuk,
The Lord is God
He is the protector.

The parallel grammatical structures, as well as the repetitiveness and shortness of the lines deliver a 'strong punch', at the same time conveying reassurance. The line 'the Lord is God' may be especially welcome where Islam reigns. The line in mother tongue, *Amaanawu ammuu Ateemit*, is characterized by both alliteration (*m-m-m*) and by assonance (*a...u...a...u*). With the exception of the first verse, each of final lines has a parallel structure, again with *a* and *u* sounds figuring prominently.

O' ammuu Ateemit anabe. 'He is the Holy God';
O' ammuu Afakenaawu, 'He is the savior';
O' ammuu ákotulaawu. 'He is the deliverer';
O' ammuu Afooyaawu, 'He is the protector'.

Interestingly, while never wavering from the biblical text, the songs proposed do not focus on the details of Habakkuk's dilemma nor that of the people of Israel. If singers or hearers of this song have studied the book, then the song would evoke many truths found therein⁶⁰. But it does not give enough information to distinguish Habakkuk from other prophets.

The same book clearly impressed another of our participants with two features of the Lord: his 'ancientness' (1.12) and his preparedness for and victory in war (3.9; 14). This composer seemed particularly inspired by the imagery of war: the sheath of arrows, the arrows themselves, a spear piercing. (We would imagine this is because it fits his culture). He thus invokes God's strength to protect his people.

Song in Konabere (Mali) by Djélé Diarra John

May the **God of old** protect us, please (yo)
*****, please
We ask you to take your sheath and to get your spear ready, please
I say, May God protect (us), please
May God protect (us), please.
May **God of ancestors** protect (us)

May the **God of old** protect us, please
*****, please
We ask you to take your sheath and to get your spear ready, please
I say, May God protect (us), please
May God protect (us), please.
May the **God of all peoples** protect (us)

⁶⁰ This would be a very interesting object of study. What themes inspire African writers? How much 'historicity' is necessary? What would be the setting for singing such songs, etc.? The research topics are without number!

This song is faithful to the spirit of the book of Habakkuk, presupposing a time of danger. It is a song of invocation, with its repetitive request: 'protect'. In this beautiful poem of supplication, there is a line-final repetitive *yo*, meaning 'please' or 'yes, do it'. His poetic use of inclusios in both verses (see bold above) is striking. The varying names of God and the subtle developments from one parallel line to another are remarkably like Hebrew poetry.

Without making this explicit, as a consultant I was perhaps expecting and looking for balanced expression of the content of Habakkuk, but this was not the case. Another participant, extremely affected by the violence in western Ivory Coast, with the help of his wife, composed a very sad song, concentrating on the first chapter of the book:

Song in Guere (Ivory Coast) , Pasteur Oulote

Verse 1 (based on 1.3-4)

There was a time of suffering
Habakkuk proclaimed his vision to Israel
There was a period of suffering
Israel abandoned the Lord

Verse 2 (based on 1.5-6)

God gave a vision to Habakkuk
I am sending the Babylonians to capture you
These Babylonians, nothing can conquer them
They will oppress you, these evil people I raise up.

Verse 3 (based on 3.2 and 1.6)

Habakkuk he called on the Lord, come *ooo*
Merciful One, come save us *ooo*
The Lord sent the Babylonians anyway
This evil people destroyed Israel *ooo*

This song seems almost to give no hope, and when the pastor submitted his work, he added the following comment: 'This song, we have interpreted it taking into account the history of the suffering and despair of the prophet and the people of Israel. Frankly, these past two years, I did not read this book (Habakkuk) carefully enough. This workshop permitted me to do this and I was blessed and encouraged. My people, the Wè people, are destroyed, ruined, smashed, and no one talks about it. As is the case for Israel and Habakkuk, is there a merciful God who will finally liberate us from this oppression? I want to appropriate the hope of Habakkuk, but when will the executions stop⁶¹? I do believe in God, the true one. He is alive and he is =*Kladinyon*, the Liberator'.

If time had permitted, we probably would have encouraged our student to write one more verse of the song, expressing that he does have in a Living God, one who will ensure that one day, justice will be done.

⁶¹ His own brother and family were tricked by the foreign neighbors they had welcomed and shot point blank.

Many were touched by the final verse of the book, and our woman pastor composed yet another song based on the 3.18. She entitles the song, ‘The Lord is my strength’: The song is sung many times. The text itself is quite brief, and a good example of how closely a Scripture based song can be to the original [SPOT 9]:

Odomunḡa mun Limbeni / yɛ ti mun fé nciɛn.	Lord, my Master, he is my strength
Yó yó mun élan/ manké ɔlól élan	He makes my feet like the feet of a deer.
Yɛ man mun/mun latɪ /ɛbúkɛ mun wó ówló	He makes I can walk on the tops high up on the mountain.

Presenting one’s own creative work orally in front of all creates a great deal of enthusiasm. But it can also be a learning experience. At least one of the students’ songs seemed far off the mark, in terms of its link to the text. He noted that the message of Habakkuk led him to two conclusions: (i) that believers should wait in silence with faith for God to act and (ii) that all idols are vain. This inspired him to compose a song made up of one line resolutions:

verse 1, ‘I will no longer consult the marabout’,
 verse 2, ‘I will no longer steal’,
 verse 3, ‘I will no longer worship fetiches’,
 verse 4, ‘I will no longer drink wine’,

Each verse has is followed by an intervening and repetitive refrain:

‘it made me dirty (‘it made me impure’).

Clearly, with the possible exception of verse 4, there is nothing non Scriptural about these lines and there are verses in the book of Habakkuk warning against idolatry. But interestingly the lyrics do seem to be ‘all about me, Lord, all about me’. It seems justifiable to create songs which are *responses* to a Scriptural text rather than the *expression* of it, but this song and the reactions it expresses seem quite far from the content of the book under study here. Further, one wonders about this tendency to harp on the negative, a tendency which seems to crop up quite a bit in many contexts in African song creations⁶².

New Testament scripture-based songs

Another type of exercise is to produce Scriptural songs based on narrative. In one non UBS workshop which I did not attend, the goal was to produce scripture songs based on the Gospels. These songs were ‘checked’ by exegetes (MA level) but no Bible translation consultant was present. We asked the students of our Media and Translation course (also MA level, from various francophone African countries) to evaluate the lyric content of these creations, from back translations into French (the recordings were not available), a task they took very seriously. Below are two such songs, with a summary of students’ reactions:

Song based on Matthew 13.24-30, ‘Weeds among the Wheat’

Jesus, he’s the one who told a parable.
 He says : the world to come is like a man who planted his rice field.
 Jesus, he’s the one who told a proverb.
 He says : the world to come is like a man who planted his rice field.

⁶² Again this is another topic which warrants some serious questioning and research. What role does negativity play in the reflection and expression of African Christian theology? What role should it play, given many believe the job is rather to share ‘good news’?

When he was sleeping,
In the black night, the one who is against him came and him, he planted gagnalava⁶³
When he was sleeping,
In the black night, the one who is against him came and him, he planted gagnalava.

His servants said, Master ! we planted rice.
How can it be that inside there is gagnalava?
The master says : The one who is against me planted gagnalava
The master says : The one who is against me planted gagnalava

They said : should we go and pull it out ?
The master says : No ! Don't touch it⁶⁴
The master says : No ! Don't touch it

Don't pull it out so that you don't take out the rice
Don't pull it out so that you don't take out the rice
When the rice will ripen, we will know (what is) rice and gagnalava

We know rice and we know gagnalava
We know rice and we know gagnalava
We know rice and we know gagnalava
We know gagnalava
We know gagnalava

The master says: first pull out the gagnalava
And you will tie it together and throw it into the fire
And when you pull out the rice, you will put in the store
Because we know rice and we know gagnalava

We know rice and we know gagnalava
We know rice and we know gagnalava
We know gagnalava
We know gagnalava

The harvester, it's him who his Jesus.
His field, it's that which is life on this earth
What is planted, that's the children of the life to come.
Gagnalava, it's him who is the Devil⁶⁵
The one who is fighting you, it is the bad spirit.
The time when the rice is ripe, it's the time of the judgment of God.

If you hear the word of Jesus,
In the same way one pulls out gagnalava and one throws it in the fire,
It's in the same way he will send his angels
To gather up all the evil people to throw them in the fire
And they will take the ripe ones⁶⁶ and send them in the life that does not end.
When they get there, they will be in joy.
We will be far from the eternal fire.

⁶³ This is a plant that looks exactly like rice, but is not. One can only tell the difference once the plant is ripe and the grains come off the stock.

⁶⁴ Literally take your hands from the side of it.

⁶⁵ The coordinator (non consultant) says in a note to this song 'In the (biblical) text it is said that the tares are the 'sons of the evil one', but we accepted for this song that the tares is the evil one because in Kru culture, it is believed that where the son is, there is the father. The son is the image of the father.

⁶⁶ In French 'les achevés'

The one who has good ears, he should listen to the word of Jesus.
The one who has good ears, he should listen to the word of Jesus.

Because we know rice and we know gagnarava
We know rice and we know gagnarava
We know rice and we know gagnarava
We know gagnarava
We know gagnarava

While from a local perspective, this song demonstrates high quality musical and poetic features and does present the main elements of the parable, the students in our media class (and their professor) all disapproved of its present content for various reasons. It is not the fact that the song is far longer than the actual parable that poses a problem, but the emphases, translation choices, and ambiguities which are present here.

First, the refrain which is repeated at least 3 times would normally be the place to communicate a major theme or message. We would expect to encode some idea that singers and hearers need to retain. But the refrain here seems to put the emphasis is on ‘what **we** know’: **we** know the difference between the good and bad seed (so to speak). But this parable seems rather to be saying almost the opposite: **we** do not know much, we need to leave things in God’s hands, who in the end will see that justice is done.

The repetitive lines, ‘we know the *gagnarava*’, also seem to focus on the negative⁶⁷. Before beginning song composition, a thorough exegesis needs to be carried out. After reading the song, we ask ourselves, is this song communicating the main points of Christ’s parable here?

Whether or not rice and *gagnarava* are acceptable renderings from a historical point of view is subject to debate. Leaving this problem aside, what really seems questionable are certain translation choices. For example, the ‘kingdom of heaven’ is rendered as ‘the world to come’. While we would not be surprised if composers substituted the more common ‘kingdom of *God*’ here for this often difficult to translate expression, we ask ourselves if it is wise to limit the scope of God’s kingdom (which the gospels proclaim ‘is here’ ‘is near’) to a future ‘world to come’. This problem shows that texts *must be pre-checked by a consultant*, so that *key terms* are discussed and approved *before* song composition begins.

What is probably most disturbing from an exegetical-theological point of view are the lines:

The master says: first pull out the gagnarava
And *you* will tie it together and throw it into the fire
And when *you* pull out the rice, you will put in the store.

The trouble here is the ‘you’ which seems to refer to believers, to those asking the question, ‘should we pull them out?’ In the general context of Scriptural teaching, it is not believers who pass or carry out judgment, but God and/or his messengers, the angels. Such teaching, implying that believers should ‘throw evil non-believers into the fire’ is nothing short of dangerous, especially in a socio-political context where violence and serious cases of injustice are common day experiences.

There is also a case of possible ambiguity and certainly mistranslation in the repetitive lines:

⁶⁷ Having lived among these people, we are not surprised. I can remember French choruses lustily being sung, with the favorite line being repeated, ‘you will go to the fire, you will go to the fire’, with a heart felt ‘halelujah’ coming after that line.

When *he* was sleeping,
In the black night, the one who is against him came and him, he planted gagnarava⁶⁸

Taking the lines in context, the he refers to the man who planted the field, though this should be tested, to ensure that Jesus (in a quick up with Jesus sleeping in the boat) is not understood. However, for fidelity's sake, we note that in Greek the text says 'while *the men* (RSV); NIV, CEV 'everyone') was sleeping'. Testing would need to be carried out to determine how hearers process and understand these lines, but better the text can be easily changed to be closer to the text.

The second song we looked at coming out of this song creation workshop comes from the story of Jesus appearing on the road to Emmaus:

Song 'On the Road to Emmaus' Luke 24.13-35

Aaa, éee, oooo !
Alé aoo!
Oh our Father!

Father God, your son who they killed because of sins⁶⁹,
it's because of that, they rejoice.
What shame!

Mother Mary, your son that they killed because of sins,
it's because of that, they rejoice.
What shame!

Oh Joseph, your son that they killed because of sins,
it's because of that, they rejoice.
What shame!

Jesus says:
it is so that his father and we can be reconciled (become allies) \
that his blood was poured out on the cross.
Respond, 'yes, Alleluia!
Yes, Alleluia, for we are saved, the blood of Jesus liberated us from the slavery of sin.'

When the Jews killed Jesus, three days later,
Two of his disciples were going to Emmaus.
They were discouraged (no strength in the bones).
They had nothing left in their heart.
They were walking on the road and talking.
They believed Jesus would take them out of the hand of their enemies.
They were sad and they were talking.
And the master of miracles, Jesus came down before their eyes.
He said: 'Brothers,
What are you talking about?
Why are you talking?'

Cléopas said:
Jesus of Nazareth who they killed in Jerusalem,

⁶⁸The coordinator noted 'this is a wild plant that looks just like rice, but you can only tell the difference when the grains are formed.

⁶⁹ In the French text, generic 'sins'.

Jesus who had a good heart, who they killed,
Jesus who reconciles, who they killed
Jesus who tells the truth, who they killed,
And the high priests among us who are part of the circle of the ones who killed him,
Where are you from and you don't know?
Where do you come from and you haven't heard (about it)?

This morning two women from among us went to the tomb to see
When they arrived, Jesus was not in the tomb.
Our men went to look in the tomb.
When they went, it's true, Jesus was not in the tomb.

Him, they saw him, they met him, they saw him⁷⁰
Our men went to look in the tomb,
When they went, it's true, Jesus was not in the tomb.
The disciples of Jesus said,
'It's true, it's Jesus we have seen,
Him who does miracles came out of the ground,
It's him we have seen'.

Jesus, the master said,
'Why are your hearts so hard that you have not understood?
Jesus, the master said,
Why are your hearts so hard that you have not understood?'

We will stop the song at this point, because it is indeed too long to quote and comment on here. The song has some very interesting features, one of which is linking the women at the tomb to the men on the road to Emmaus. It seems a valid link, since both sets of people 'see Jesus' but do not recognize him.

But this song has many problems, even if the workshop leader commented that this song was not meant to be directly tied to a specific Scripture but rather to be a 'free' Christian song. In the first part, we see that the beginning verses, with its calls to Mother Mary and Joseph, are only loosely tied to the major theme, the meeting on the road to Emmaus. This is really no direct cause of concern in itself: these lines could be part of a well known song, serving as an introduction to a new song composition. However, while these calls may simply be a technique to draw people in to (or enliven) the song, they may raise some evangelical eyebrows! Would these 'calls' be considered prayers to saints, thus making the song doctrinally marked? We cannot know the answer without testing, but we might ask the composer and/or the listeners why they are here and what their link is to the periscope in question.

Another area for questioning here is the actual theological content of the lines:

'Father God, your son who they killed because of sins⁷¹,
it's because of that, they rejoice. What shame!'

While we all know Jesus died for our sins, it is not clear what 'they' (an agent-less passive generic, 'he was killed') 'killed him because of sins' actually means. Did they kill him because of *his* sins or *our* sins? Whatever this case, this seems to stray from the biblical truth that *God* allowed Jesus to die to pay the price for our sins.

There also seems to be Scriptural addition here, as well, as we cannot think of specific instances where the killers of Jesus 'rejoiced'. The negativity of the lines is also cause for concern. The repetitions 'they killed', 'they killed' 'they killed' (a repetition which occurs later in the song), coupled with 'the shame-shame-shame'

⁷¹ In the French text, generic 'sins'.

sequence send the message that this is a major focus of the song, where the major thrust of at least the Emmaus narrative is just the contrary: Jesus is, in fact, very much alive. This shows how many questions we need to ask: Is this kill-kill-kill setting up for the climatic good news that Jesus has come back from the dead. Is shame-shame-shame this composer's way of 'thinking' and 'expressing theology' in this shame oriented culture? Much research needs to be carried out to see the importance and/or limits of such expression within Scripture based song creation.

As we move through the song, various other issues surface. As the Evangelist John, this composer makes explicit that it is *the Jews* who killed Jesus. This statement is certainly not false, but many listeners will not have the Bible background necessary to understand that Christ himself and his first disciples were Jews too. Is this inflammatory? Should this line be modified?

Other lines surprise us: in the song Jesus 'comes down' rather than 'drawing near' (RSV, compare: NIV 'came up', CEV 'came near'). Peter seems to see Christ at the tomb and may even be with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus!⁷².

In our course on media and translation, students and their professor made other comments as well. They agreed that though the song had strong potential, it did not 'qualify' as a Scripture-based song. Its content would have undergone significant changes if a translation consultant had been present at this song creation workshop.

5.3 Music choice

Unfortunately we have not had the privilege of working with an ethnomusicologist at any of our workshops. We would imagine that songs would be recorded, melodies and tempos identified and classified, reinforcing our analyses of literary genre. As Finnegan notes "much of what is normally classed as poetry in African oral literature is designed to be *performed in a musical setting*, and *the musical and verbal elements are thus interdependent*"⁷³ (1970:4). Music/melodies accompanying the Scripture song should normally be in conformity to the genres of the community language, as well as the goal of speaking of the source text. As with poetic genre, appropriate 'matches' must be established.

Of course music should be purely *non-denominational*. In our work on various Bible society (inter-confessional) projects, we have had to reject several songs due to a single term or bar of music which would evoke one church over another.

The issue of drums

In the past, any inclusion of drums in Christian music has been banned. This instrument has often been considered by many missionaries as 'spirit' or Satan-controlled'. In today's world, drum accompaniment is often an important part of any musical (and often simple verbal) communication.⁷⁴ This is in line with Krabill's monumental work on Harris hymnology, where he describes three important stages in music development, where at some point indigenous worshippers reject local melodies and instruments as pagan, only to return to them at a later stage.

The problem of music is, in fact, huge, be it melody or instrument choice and various strategies can be proposed. One can wait for communities to go through the cycle described by Krabill or one can try to

⁷² The exegete who 'checked' this song says that the first was a Scripture-based song and the second a Christian rendering, where liberty was permitted and taken. As a consultant, we would accept wider Christian songs, but would never accept including false facts. See also Noss and Renju who reject poetic rendering which introduce items contrary to Scripture or omit important parts of the message.

⁷³ Emphasis mine.

⁷⁴ Ehivet, Simone. 1983.

educate and sensitize the community as to the neutrality of various melodies, song genres, and local instruments. The Scripture to song enterprise is hardly a new or ‘developing world’ phenomenon. The Church of Scotland’s Metrical Psalter (revised by the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, 1880) has been used for centuries and continues to be used in churches today. It allows solidly Scripture based verses to be sung in community (liturgically) as well as individually⁷⁵. John D. Witvliet’s gives a wonderful example in his ‘Foreward’ to *Worship and Mission for the Global Church* (Krabill, ed. XXI), noting that Martin Luther’s musical rendering of Psalm 46, ‘A Mighty Fortress is our God’, was set to a German folk song! Such songs, ‘gone global’, are sung the world over. While some melodies or song types may be associated with non Christian practices (in years past, in Christian circles, this included hard rock, rap, jazz type rhythms), it does not take long for music to be ‘liberated’, ‘wiped clean’ and universalized. Extending from what Jesus said in Matt 15.1-20 concerning impurity, it is hard to think of claiming any melody is ‘unclean’. Besides adopting this attitude, we should also be open to all types of cross cultural sharing (The phenomenon of ‘World music’ comes to mind).⁷⁶ and do all we can to promote God given music as a means of expressing God given truth. I firmly believe the world is waiting for the riches of Africa’s gifts and talents in this domain to be further discovered, appreciated, and savored. May the body of Christ be impacted by the body of Christ!⁷⁷

5.4 Performer choice

Aesthetic judgments about voice quality of course vary widely and need to be respected. During our recording of songs for the NT Hosanna presentation, prior to the team’s arrival at the studio, one woman was designated as lead singer. But as recording moved forward, dissatisfaction was expressed first by the technical team (African but from another country!), then the consultant, and finally the team members. Eventually that mini community chose another lead singer, addressing this delicate situation in their own cultural way.

As is the case for translators and other members of the translation team, singers, chorus members, readers, and music makers should be recognized by the community as being representative, as being qualified, and as having solid Christian testimonies. The various participants need to be in good health, as recording and/or performing can be highly repetitive and demanding long hours.

5.5 Recording issues

The quality of a recording can also raise important issues. Modern technology allows for recording basically anywhere. But because our ‘product’ is the Word of God, we must strive for the finest quality. This means that recording should be carried out as professionally as possible. (We have had to redo ‘takes’ of Scripture readings with roosters crowing in the background!)

The sound technician, community representatives, and consultant may have varying views as to the mixing of the recording, especially in relation to the balance between music and words. We have had

⁷⁵ It would be wonderful to have a detailed study of rhetorical devices used in this adaptation of Scripture to song, as well as a history of the melodies which accompany these texts.

⁷⁶ I myself am somewhat of schizophrenic in this respect. I try to hide my smile each time (which is often) my Abidjan church sings with such gusto ‘White, Whiter than snow’ (being sometimes the only ‘white’ there), but I also have to put a serious damper on my body movements as I sway to the beat to modern ‘acceptable’ rock in more conservative state-side churches.

⁷⁷ This also applies to sharing of African theologies and translation solutions. See Zogbo, ‘‘A l’écoute de la voix africaine : trésors cachés des langues et cultures africaines’’, paper given at the graduation ceremonies of FATEAC, July, 2010.

talented musicians-sound recorders so excited over a rhythm that the words were not in focus and/or barely audible. Again the goal of the product must be kept in focus, and the community's opinions solicited and respected.

Even if a TC is not an ethnomusicologist or musician in any sense of the word, his or her presence can be crucial during song creation and performance (recording). As a TC, it is far easier to enter into a discussion of a product in process than to suddenly appear out of nowhere at the end of a production to point out all the weaknesses or mistakes in a product. Teamwork, team interaction, and mutual respect are key here.

Consultants have the advantage of having a global viewpoint. They can pay attention to features that others might not have the time to notice. In one of our sessions, a singer was recording Scriptural songs meant to be part of a CD to be played at funerals. While Bete funerals can be pretty loud, I was concerned that the style of the recording was too 'hot'! It would have been great to release as a 'pop' Christian CD. Because the consultant was present and picked up on this 'problem', we were able to propose and actually produce two products instead of one: a CD for funerals and another (with video) for general consumption.

5.7 Performance issues

In terms of performance, the community should be in control of how the Scripture songs are presented. The performer's physical aspect, his or her clothing, the context, the music, the gestures, dance and various body moves, should be in keeping with message, and especially be in no way shocking or offensive to any believer or non believer in the target culture.

In the case of the Bete CD, a video was made, and as is traditional, the singer was not presented alone, but accompanied by dancers. The female singers wear white, and of course, the decorum of the dance (which the TC had nothing to do with) was appropriate to the context.

Comparing, for example, Christian singers in the US and Ivory Coast, some singers may shock the other by their clothing, stance or gestures. Of course it is the *intended audience* and not some abstract one, which must be kept in mind.

5.8 Testing

No product should go on the market without proper testing in various contexts. Listeners can comment on voice quality (acceptable or not), the balance or lack of it between instrumental music and singing voices, etc. In some of our testing, people reported that the transitions between songs was too abrupt, so the sound engineer adapted to have music fade in and out between the pieces. While testing with Christian audiences is important to ensure that style and content are appropriate, testing among non Christian audiences is also crucial. In one testing session, everything seemed right. The music was culturally appropriate. The biblical texts and wording had been checked for Scriptural fidelity and accuracy. But as a group listened to the tape, one of the listeners burst out "But who is Yawe?" This translation team had adopted a transliterated form of the name of God, YHWH, and assumed their audience knew who this was. Changes were immediately made⁷⁸. This underlines the importance of group listening, but also the importance of diversifying the listeners!

5.10 Promotional Issues

⁷⁸ Two solutions are possible in this case. The unknown name *Yawe* could simply be replaced by the generic word for God, or the generic term could be introduced and then this 'new' term (we personally do not like transliteration as a solution for names of God here).

Jacket covers, such as CD covers or other advertising materials, like any other Scriptural product, must be high quality and pertinent. The cover needs to be attractive to draw those who will purchase or use the product, conforming, of course, to local standards of beauty and appropriateness. Symbolism or any image must be meaning-transparent. All aspects, including color should be tested with the community. In many cultures red, black or white have symbolic meanings which could convey or evoke negative or positive sentiments. For one cover design, I remember some community members asking re some figures, 'What are these? Ghosts?' Obviously the artist (himself from a related ethnic group) quickly proposed an alternative.

There are many outlets to promote Scriptural songs. The cell phone revolution in Africa makes songs possible, and this is actually reported in some areas in Mali⁷⁹. But of course, the 'bush telephone' is still a major communications means across Africa (just normal oral transmission).

Our Bete video has appeared on Ivoirian TV stations, and of course local radio is a very popular means of reaching a very wide audience. It should be fairly easy to promote mother tongue videos on Christian TV stations, which abound, for example, in countries like Nigeria.

CD's can now be produced and sold for as little as \$2.00 (and sometimes less). Scripture songs could be used at the beginning of radio programs (Bete literacy, for example).

Another way to promote creativity is to encourage competitions and/or crowd source projects. We are looking forward to a competition among women on the best song based on the message of the book of Ruth (November, 2013) and as well as internet contest for the best poetic renderings in Bete of some selected psalms and (why not?), their song versions, performed on UTube (a project we hope to put in place in 2014).

5.11 Legal Issues

All work should be done under contract. Contracts, formal releases, need to be supplied by those responsible for the recordings and signed by all who write the words, sing the songs, arrange the music, do the recording, etc. To ignore this side of song production is to open the door to serious problems.

5.12 Financial Issues

Here is one of the biggest challenges we are facing. Who will finance such efforts? Sponsoring a small poetry-song oriented workshop is not so expensive. Even a local Bible society can find funds (a few thousand dollars) to cover such a workshop. But sponsoring a wide scale large fully staffed workshop involves much more money, bigger venues, larger staff. What is even more expensive is envisioning production and distribution. However, mobile production units (and staff) are a definite possibility. Can we dream big? We would love, for example, to see a Psalms based poetic workshop, reaching out to language groups traumatized by war and recent crises in Ivory Coast and elsewhere. The workshop would provide training in poetic transfer leading to song creation. Adequate staff (consultants and ethnomusicologists) would be called in. On the spot recording would reduce costs. Production of CDs would be done locally and immediately. Booklets could be produced: transition materials rendered and immediately laid out by experienced typesetters. Local artwork, facilitated by experts, could be produced on the spot, the booklets going out and being produced by local printers. Translators could go home with CDs and booklets in hand, with lesson plans to train monitors who would lead Scripture based workshops, where Scriptures are read, songs are sung, art is appreciated, and healing takes place. If

⁷⁹ Diarra John, *** course report

further funds were available, a holistic component could be added on, producing a CD and book on nutritional plants which can supplement the family diet, all in mother tongue⁸⁰. The sky is the limit if funds can simply be found and we are open to creative ways to express Scripture and encourage human development.

Concluding remarks

Poetry and song are universal means of expressing deep heart-felt emotions. Each one of us can confirm that Christian music in poetic form is alive and well worldwide. We can each testify to its powerful impact, be it song accompanied by drum in a village setting, sing and dancing to the rhythm in an Abidjan urban church, or enjoying the high tech media presentations and performances in a Californian church. We can only pray that many will become involved and promote this means of conveying Scriptural truth.

A few major points deserve reiterating.

- Poetic versions of Scripture (accompanied or not with song) touch hearts in ways we cannot measure.
- For Scripture songs to be created, the Bible must be translated and checked, paying special attention to poetic renderings of poetic passages.
- As for any Scripture product, song content must conform to the global thrust and specifics of the biblical texts.
- Training is possible at all levels: consultants, exegetes, translators, whole communities. Workshops promoting poetic translations and song creations are fun and effective!
- Should not all translation projects have a media component in the works from day 1?

A final image from the past comes to mind, a scene going back over 40 years. I am in a hospital in Sassandra, a small port town along the Ivoirian coast that Prophet Harris walked. My SIL partner Carol and I have by some miracle been able to evacuate a dear Godie friend to an ill-equipped hospital there. We are not doctors but know Gogo Marie has lockjaw, a tetanus infection acquired through an unclean injection. She lays in a darkened room, on an IV but, but according to the doctors, she is dying. She can no longer open her mouth and drink. She can no longer open her mouth to speak. But as we sit next to her mosquito covered bed, we heard a faint sound. Leaning closer, we realize Marie is humming! She is humming a Godie song expressing her faith. I honestly can't remember which song she sang. She cannot talk, but she can sing! And in this sweet way, our friend Gogo Marie sings her way into heaven.

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⁸⁰ We are thinking of plants like moringa oleifera and other plants high in protein and vitamins that can be added to traditional African sauces, etc.

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This is a print Bible based selection in French which was written with the traumatized of Western Ivory Coast in mind. It was also used recently during the aftermath of the explosion in Brazaville. Over 10,000 copies have been bought and distributed, and we have heard many testimonies of the comfort it has brought and despite its 'soft sale' of the Christian message (it is more like a bridge), lives have been changed! The accompanying artwork, inspired by old Kru drawings on houses, was tested with our audiences, and show how Scripture-inspired art can impact audiences as well. We believe this document could provide wonderful inspiration for a song creation in mother tongue and could be the basis of a very effective workshop. We have reduced some of the images to make our file lighter. For an English version or the full French version, please contact me at lynellzogbo@gmail.com.

Appendix 2

After writing this section of this article, I came across a stirring article in the *New York Times*, 'An Afghan Poet Shapes Metal and Hard Words', by Azam Ahmed (August 19, 2013, page A1, with Sangar Rahimi contributing). The journalist interviews a Muslim poet, Matiullah Turab, who, "With his unflinching words... captures the feelings of Afghans about the war and those who are responsible for it: the Americans, the Taliban, the Afghan government, Pakistan". Sounding (to me) like an Old Testament prophet, Turab states with conviction: 'A poet's job is not to write about love. A poet's job is not to write about flowers. A poet must write about the plight and pain of the people'.



Christoph Bangert for The New York Times

Listen to his words, translated from Pashto for this article:

*War has turned into a trade
Heads have been sold
as if they weigh like cotton,
and at the scale sit such judges
who taste the blood, then decide the price*

The journalist goes on to note:

'Taped versions of Mr. Turab's poems spread virally, especially among his fellow ethnic Pashtuns, whom he unabashedly champions — a tribal affinity that alienates some Tajik and Hazara listeners. His close affiliation with Hezb-i-Islami — part Islamist political party, part militant group — has put off others.

But even as his social affiliations are narrow and divisive, his poetry apparently has mass appeal:

*O flag-bearers of the world,
you have pained us a lot in the name of security
You cry of peace and security,
and you dispatch guns and ammunitions'*

Turab is a metal worker in the day, "seated on a makeshift bench, ... his clothing stained with grease...", while at night he mocks all sides, saying government officials should 'stitch three pockets into their jackets: one to collect afghanis, one for dollars and a third for Pakistani rupees'. But Azam, continues,

'For all that disdain, however, Mr. Turab has remained popular in influential corners of the government. And President Hamid Karzai recently invited him to the presidential palace in Kabul.

"The president liked my poetry and told me I had an excellent voice, but I don't know why," he said. "I criticized him."

In fact, he is quite widely in demand. Though he prefers to be home in Khost, Mr. Turab's travel schedule still far outpaces the average metalsmith's. People flock to his rare personal readings, and new poems posted on YouTube quickly become among the most-watched by Afghans. He is planning a trip to Moscow soon to receive an award from members of the Afghan diaspora there...

Mr. Turab is the latest in a long roll call of cherished Afghan poets, among the most famous of them Rumi, the Sufi mystic whose works of love and faith remain popular across the world. In this country, poetic aphorisms are woven into everyday talk, embraced by Afghans from all walks of life. In pockets of Kabul, it is not uncommon to see men bunched together as they transfer audio files of readings over Bluetooth from one cell phone to another.'

The popularity and impact of *relevant poetry* and *song* cannot be underestimated. See below a poem I found on facebook (Foyi 27 septembre, Ivorien.net), offered as a comment to an article showing a recent picture of our former first lady, Simone Ehivet Gbagbo, still held in prison unjustly for over two years.

La Brave femme africaine
La Femme de la dignité et de l'honneur de l'Afrique
Toi qui force l'admiration;
je te salue et te dis tout l'amitié de l'Afrique digne.

Brave African woman
Woman of dignity and Africa's honor
You who deserve admiration
I salute you and express all of Africa's true friendship.

Honte à tes géoliers
Honte au chef bandit;
Honte aux violeurs;
honte aux rebelles
Honte aux hors la loi

Shame to your jailers !
Shame to the criminal chief
Shame to those who rape
Shame to the rebels
Shame to those lawbreakers

HONNEUR à Toi
HONNEUR à GBAGBO
Vous êtes la fierté de l'Afrique;
votre éclat éternel ne peut ternir.
n'en déplaise aux hors la loi

HONOR to you
HONOR to Gbagbo⁸¹
You are the pride of Africa
Your eternal shining cannot dim
Even if the lawbreakers do not agree

⁸¹ Husband to Simone, author and former history professor and former president of Cote d'Ivoire, also held in prison (La Haye) for over two years.

Would that Christian Scripture based poetry and song have such a hearing and enjoy such a widespread following!

Appendix 3

Bete CD funerals –sorry to be supplied

Bete songs accompanying Hosanna recording of NT, Faith Comes by Hearing, 1999⁸²

The following songs were composed especially to accompany the Faith Comes by Hearing recording (1999).

Procedure: The translator and TC identified passages where it would be good to have songs.

Through asking around, one Bete woman attending the Baptist church was identified as to being a good singer-composer. She went to work writing songs for each verse. The results were often mediocre, as many non biblical ideas were introduced. The TC had to sit with her as she rectified and recomposed, approving this line, suggesting what was biblical and not biblical. (The TC concentrated on meaning and did not interfere in any way with the actual Bete expressions or tunes).

The recording was somewhat unorganized, as the Hosanna/Theovision technicians at first did not want to admit the recording of the songs. At the insistence of the TC, translators, and team of readers, they acquiesced. The recording was then done in the utmost haste: the reading team began to practice the songs, dividing up into a lead singer and the chorus (no TC input). As the first recordings proceeded, many complained about the voice of the lead singer. In my presence and with my blessing, in a somewhat emotional, unpleasant atmosphere, the lead (female) singer was replaced by another. No directives were given as to how any song should be sung, or who and how the tam-tam should be played. It was an early example of crowd-sourcing. The TC just left all this in the hands of the representative community. To me, given the difficulties within the team and the initial opposition of the technicians, the output was quite astounding. Many have since commented on the quality of the songs, both their content and performance.

Entry and theme song accompanying the beginning of each book of the NT.

Give ear⁸³ (throw your) to the understand the Word of God
Give ear to hear the Word of God (X 6)

Give ear to hear the Word of Eternal God.

Lead singer: The Word of God
Chorus (many singers): it is (gives/brings) life

The Word of Eternal God, it is joy.
The Word of God, it is truth.
The Word of Eternal God, it is light.

⁸² This was a long process. The NT published in 1997 was initially recorded in September, 1999, in Abidjan by Hosanna technicians and corrections to the reading were made in Daloa by Mark Danso in April, 2001. In February, 2002, representatives of Theovision met with ABCI representatives to plan the launching of this program.

⁸³ *A pō n nukwli* literally, ‘you (PL) throw ears’

The other songs were written by the same song writer and performed by the group of Hosanna FCBH NT readers. The translators and the consultant together chose appropriate verses considered key to serve as inspiration for the song writer. In the end, however, we only retained those, a total of 23, which passed the TC test of faithfulness to the biblical text and the general thrust of Scripture. For example, I rejected

I was so bad, bad, bad
I used to drink, drink, drink
Jesus saved me (X 8)

But when I wanted to reject the Revelation-inspired song as too negative

Jesus said 'you are not hot'
Jesus said 'you are not cold'
Because you are lukewarm,
I will vomit you from my mouth'

the translators, composer and readers loudly opposed me, This is the message we need to hear, and the song remained in the FCBH recording.

Repetition was an element allowed as often as desired, an example, from Matthew 6.33, 'seek ye first the kingdom of God':

Give God the first place
Eternal God the first place

What will come it is for you (the remaining, it is yours)
What will come later, it is for you.

Approved by Catholics (a catechist) and protestants (Baptist pastor), this cassette has had some success. Distribution remains a serious weak point in our programs.